DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 424 HE 031 983

AUTHOR	Zemsky, Robert, Ed.
TITLE	Coming Around.
INSTITUTION	Knight Collaborative, Akron, OH.; Pennsylvania Univ., Philadelphia. Inst. for Research on Higher Education.
SPONS AGENCY	John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami, FL.
PUB DATE	1999-04-00
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Research on Higher Education, 4200 Pine Street, 5A, Philadelphia, PA 19104-4090; Tel: 800-437-9799 (Toll Free); e-mail:pp-requests@irhe.upenn.edu; Web site: http://www.irhe.upenn.edu/knight/knight-main.html
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Opinion Papers (120)
JOURNAL CIT	Policy Perspectives; v8 n4 Apr 1999
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Cooperation; Educational Finance; Educational Needs; *Educational Policy; *Educational Trends; Higher Education; Private Colleges; Public Colleges; Public Policy; State Universities; *Statewide Planning
IDENTIFIERS	*Florida

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the higher education challenges facing the state of Florida in the coming decades, focusing on solutions to demographic, economic, and social issues that may be applicable to other states as well. The state's population has increased substantially since 1950 and continues to increase at a high rate, placing significant demands on public and private higher education. An aversion to tax increases in the state, the low tuition charged by state colleges and universities, and the lack of coordinated educational planning are major factors influencing higher education policy in the state. Florida needs to better utilize private colleges and universities to meet the growing educational needs of its population. Among the conclusions reached are the following: Florida needs to encourage broad public discussion of policy issues facing the state; it must seek greater mission differentiation among institutions, truth-in-pricing of higher education, institutional accountability in regard to learning outcomes, and better coordination between higher education and the business community; public policy must consider the state's independent institutions an integral part of the state system of higher education; and the state must make a greater investment in learning infrastructure. (MDM)

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PERSPECTIVES

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PERSPECTIVES

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Coming Around

It was John Glenn's day—the launch from Florida and return to space 36 years after his Mercury flight had signaled that the U.S. was in the space race to stay. In 1962 he had been alone and commanding. On this day he was not 40 but 77 years of age, and he was neither alone nor in command but the last member of a seven-person crew. Still, he was the attraction; he was the reason the President had come to Florida and the reason our Independent Colleges Roundtable had paused in its deliberations to celebrate the return of an American icon.

We too had gathered in Florida, having been convened as a special roundtable focusing on the context in which private higher education might best serve the interests of a state whose system of higher education was predominantly public. We could not help but observe, as the countdown paused for a moment, how much the hoopla surrounding John Glenn's return to space seemed to exemplify the adage that "what goes around comes around." For all its importance, this event was the work of a space program that had hung too many hats on the rack of a Cold War mentality — and was now reorchestrating old heroics in search of renewed purpose and direction.

Nor could we help thinking that, in an important way, higher education in Florida had come to resemble the NASA program itself, seeking vitality in pursuit of a self-concept rooted more in the past than in the future. While the state's demographic challenges outline a future that differs markedly from its past, public and private higher education in Florida, as in most states, still takes its primary direction from a vision of college and university life rooted more in the 1960s than in the 1990s or beyond.

The roundtable that gave rise to this issue of *Policy Perspectives* was the fourth in a special series convened to consider the context for state and federal policy in an age increasingly dominated by market forces. The first of these, entitled "Rumbling" (*Policy Perspectives*, November 1996), described a flagging commitment to policy as an instrument for achieving the public good, and it revisited a set of questions posed nearly three decades earlier by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education: "Who pays for higher education? Who benefits? Who should pay?" A year later, "A Promise Worth Keeping" (August 1997) focused on what California had learned in the aftermath of that state's economic downturn and its impact on a multi-tiered system of colleges and universities that includes a substantial number of private institutions. Last fall, "A Very Public Agenda" (September 1998) again asked what the public's stake should be in an environment that often defines higher

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education as a private good, to be financed increasingly by students who seek the economic advantages a college degree confers. In that essay, the message was simple and direct: the public has a major stake in who goes to college, how the institutions they attend operate, and how those institutions are held accountable to both market and political forces. Because higher education belongs on the public's agenda, the essay argued, what is important is a better balance of market forces and public policies yielding institutions and public initiatives that are both "mission centered and market smart."

Our Florida roundtable began with that proposition. Not surprisingly, given that its membership consisted primarily of business leaders and affiliates of the state's independent institutions, the roundtable asked how best a state might tap the experiences and considerable assets of its private colleges and universities to address a changing social and economic climate. It is a question being asked more frequently and with greater urgency in most states. We understand that Florida's answers will necessarily differ from those that a California, Vermont, Colorado, Illinois, or North Carolina might devise and pursue. But there are likely to be as many similarities as differences in the ways that independent colleges and universities help to fulfill a state's goals for higher education. As such, we believe that the example of one state can provide important lessons that exceed the frame of its particular history and circumstance.

The "Emerging Catastrophe"

The metaphors suggested by a space program once more in search of a defining mission are not a bad place to begin that consideration. Florida higher education shares with NASA a need to rise above and take account of itself — to see itself from the perspective of a shuttle that has gone beyond the grasp of the earth's atmosphere, beyond the tug of daily events to a point from which one can look down and see things whole. While our roundtable commanded none of the media attention of the Discovery's launching, we shared the goal of putting things in perspective, of considering from a broader vantage the challenges facing the state and a higher education system comprised of both public and private institutions.

Although Florida achieved statehood in 1845, the most telling events in its history have occurred in the past 50 years. In a sense the history of this state since mid-century presents a microcosm of the development that has characterized the nation as a whole. In 1950, Florida's population was 2.7 million, and in that year the state's high schools produced 16,000 graduates. By 1990, the population had grown to 12.9 million, and there were 86,000 high school graduates. The population of Florida now increases at the rate of 800 people per day, and projections are that in 2010 the state's population will reach 17.8 million and some 126,000 youngsters will graduate from high school.

It is often said that there are many Floridas, corresponding not just to the four points of the compass but to distinct regions within densely populated areas. It is the local unit that dominates — politically, economically, socially, and, as a consequence, educationally.

The rapidity of growth and change gives the state a comparatively unsettled feeling, similar to that which characterized other states at earlier periods of their histories. Beyond the rate of growth itself is the fact that the state's population consists of people from an extraordinary range of backgrounds and circumstances. It is often said that there are many Floridas, corresponding not just to the four points of the compass but to distinct regions within densely populated areas. It is the local unit that dominates — politically, economically, socially, and, as a consequence, educationally. There are few countervailing forces. Despite its rapid economic growth, Florida lacks a strong, unifying corporate community, and indeed comparatively few national or international companies have chosen to locate their headquarters in the state. Nor is Florida a state of cities — that is, "urbs" — that in other states provide elements of common identity. Residents of this state more often conceive their geographical setting in terms of "principalities," as small as a ten-condominium district that has its own representative pressing for its specific interests in the state legislature.

In California it is called "Tidal Wave II." In Florida, the state's Business Higher Education Partnership has described the steady growth in population and the resulting new demand for postsecondary places as the "emerging catastrophe." Over the next decade, the

size of the 18-to-24-year-old cohort is expected to increase by approximately 200,000; the growth of this population is likely to yield an additional 80,000 young men and women who will seek some form of postsecondary education. It now appears that the Florida Board of Regents is proposing to meet this anticipated demand almost entirely by increasing the size of the public university system. Current drafts of the strategic plan of the State University System of Florida call for the system to accommodate an additional 60,000 to 80,000 students during the decade.

Yet the concerns expressed by the Business Higher Education Partnership make clear that meeting increased demand for higher education is only half of the problem. The prevailing sense among the state's business leadership is that, in general, the quality of education students receive from Florida's higher education system is less than that of other states. Florida is not a first stop in the circuit of those who recruit young talent to work for national firms — and too often the state is not even a second or a third stop on that circuit. In this respect Florida stands in contrast to Texas or California, both of which have experienced rapid growth and yet have succeeded in creating higher education environments comprising a variety of institutions both public and private with a range of distinctive strengths.

Over the next decade the size of the 18-to-24-year-old cohort in Florida is expected to increase by approximately 200,000; the growth of this population is likely to yield an additional 80,000 young men and women who will seek some form of postsecondary education.

While Florida's business community has articulated the kinds of qualities it seeks in those who become part of the workforce, the prevailing sense among these leaders is that neither public nor private institutions have produced enough graduates who have attained those basic skills. And when business leaders consider how they might provide their workers with task-specific training to meet the changing requirements of work in a particular industry, traditional institutions of higher education too seldom come to mind as first-order providers of new knowledge and skills. The business community perceives both public and private institutions to be "low-productivity centers" — organizations that are neither very accountable to quality standards nor very nimble in responding to changing needs or new opportunities.

Centers of Gravity

The underlying reality that roils the waters of both public and private higher education in Florida derives from a combination of three circumstances. None of these is unique to Florida, but together they have the potential for catastrophic consequences because they determine a funding environment for higher education that is not well-suited to present needs, much less future ones. The first of these circumstances is a long-standing aversion to taxes. While the sales tax of 6 percent is comparable to that of many states, Florida is one of eight states in the Union that has no state income tax. Escaping the manacles of taxation, after all, has been part of the goal for Floridians. High taxes happen elsewhere, not here, thank you.

Second, there is a habit of mind that regards higher education as an entitlement and the tuitions charged by public institutions as the equivalent of use taxes. The former is absolute; the latter is at best a necessary evil that must always be kept to a bare minimum. According to the Florida Board of Regents, the average price that a Florida resident pays to attend a public university full-time is about $1,750 per year. The actual cost of providing a student with that education is about $7,790 per year, which means that the state subsidizes 78 percent of the tuition cost per student attending a public university. In addition, the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, begun in 1997, provides merit scholarships of some $1,500 per year to over 40,000 students, effectively making it free for the most promising and competitive Florida students to pursue a baccalaureate degree in one of the state's public institutions.

Third, there is a sense that in Florida good things come about as much through the accidents of circumstance and individual ambition as through coordinated planning and oversight. By disposition, Floridians focus more on individual agendas than on broadly inclusive visions of either state or civitas. The result is an environment in which market forces exert as much

influence as public policy on the shape of higher education. Although the state legislature maintains a tight managerial grip on its public institutions through a remarkably bureaucratic system of central reporting and budgeting, in broader questions of educational vision and institutional mission the state's public policy has been remarkably laissez-faire. Intense competition distracts both the attention and the resources of institutions that could otherwise focus more clearly on their educational missions. Key decisions — such as the location of a law school, a graduate program in the sciences, or an initiative designed to serve older learners — are less the result of deliberation leading to clear state educational policy, and more the product of political and market forces in which the focus is always local.

The result is that Florida gets less than what its future demands. With its historic public universities distant from the centers of population growth, the state's fastest-growing regions and their universities have become ever-stronger competitors for public attention as well as public funding. Each has formulated and then pursued its own ambitions largely unchecked by any collective sense of the purposes that the state's public universities together might achieve. As each of these institutions has developed, it has come to symbolize the aspirations not just of its own faculty but the locality of which it is part.

The anomalies inherent in Florida's system of higher education become most apparent when one turns to the private college sector. Currently the state's private four-year colleges and universities enroll about 16 percent of its total higher education population — a percentage comparable to that of California. The difference, however, is that in California independent institutions are consciously regarded as fulfilling important, well-defined roles in meeting the state's educational needs. The California Master Plan conceives of independent institutions as key players in ensuring an expanded range of educational choices, while the state's Cal Grant program makes it possible for residents to pursue those options.

Yet Florida appears more reluctant to accord its independent colleges and universities a similarly public role in meeting the educational needs of its citizens and employers. When the state considers whether a particular academic program is in short supply and thus in need of additional offerings, its calculus seldom takes into account the number of places in Florida's independent institutions that offer that specialty.

It is, however, the state's commitment to low-tuition public higher education that puts Florida's independent colleges substantially at risk at a time when the state faces a growing need for additional capacity. While independent colleges and universities in Florida as elsewhere subsidize the cost of undergraduate education through endowment income and other means, they cannot begin to compete with the state's public universities on the basis of price. The Florida Resident Access Grant — commonly referred to by its acronym, "the FRAG" — was created 20 years ago to help defray a proportion of the additional cost incurred by Florida residents who choose to attend one of the state's independent institutions. If the state were to fulfill its commitment in today's dollars, the FRAG would provide grants in the amount of $3,000 per student. The state legislature does not currently fund the FRAG at a sufficient level to offset private college tuitions by that amount; the state grant to Floridians attending one of the state's independent colleges or universities is now $1,800 per year.

In this environment, Florida's independent institutions find it difficult to develop new academic programs to address changing needs and opportunities, particularly if such programs require the appointment of tenured faculty. Independent colleges have found that, whenever they begin a program that proves successful, the public universities soon develop similar programs that compete directly for the same students. Because the price of attendance is so much lower, the public universities ultimately draw away much of the market the independents had created through their initiatives. As the president of one independent college in Florida has said, "It's hard to compete with a product that the public institutions provide at 20 percent of cost."

Return on Investment

The major challenge facing higher education in Florida, as elsewhere, we suggest, is not simply a matter of increasing the number of students enrolled. Nor is it just a matter of making more rational how the state's system of higher education uses its resources and assets — be they public or private, two- or four-year, research- or teaching-centered. Ultimately what matters

are the educational outcomes that system produces — or, to rephrase the challenge in light of Florida's traditions, how the state achieves those outcomes at reasonable prices, in a way that preserves its commitment to access and geographic dispersion.

How would the state know that its public and private institutions of higher education were achieving those educational outcomes more effectively than at present? Here there is no shortage of possible measures: increased retention and graduation rates; increased admissions by graduates of the state's colleges and universities to the nation's most competitive graduate and professional schools. A more complex approach would be to ask: To what extent do the achievements of an institution's graduates four or five years out exceed what one might have expected of them? Probably the most telling measure — and the one least likely to register on the scale of prestige that currently determines institutional worth — is the value that an institution adds to the lives of its students. What this measure, more than anything else, would tap is each institution's capacity to expand individual opportunity and thus enhance the quality of economic and civic life across the state.

The first step along this path requires a willingness not just to discuss but to measure how well the various sectors of the state's system of higher education are meeting their obligation to produce an educated and productive citizenry. It is a challenge that faces every state and every institution of higher education. It is also a challenge that the state of Florida has taken on before and needs now to revisit.

As part of this process, Florida needs to ask how it can make more effective use of its independent colleges and universities as part of a strategy for meeting an increased demand for access as well as quality. In Florida, as in any state, independent institutions have an important role to play in offering an expanded range of choices to those who seek a baccalaureate education. These private institutions need to be regarded as a set of tools for achieving the specific objectives that the state looks to its universities and colleges to fulfill. Independent institutions offer more than just the promise of expanded capacity. Being smaller in size and having missions that place a central importance on teaching and mentorship are important assets, and a higher education policy that develops conscious partnerships with these institutions has a greater likelihood of achieving a range of educational goals and of enhancing the quality of life for the state and its citizens.

Florida's independent institutions must also ask themselves how effectively they have contributed to the goals of providing increased access and improving the quality of higher education in the state. To what extent, and in what ways, have the actions of these institutions been conducive to a greater sense of partnership with the state in fulfilling shared objectives? To what extent have the independent institutions, like their counterparts in the public sector, expended time and effort competing for the most promising undergraduates, even at the expense of serving other students effectively? How extensive are the connections that Florida's private colleges and universities have established with their local communities, with local and regional businesses, and with the economics of the state as a whole?

Ironically, a reliance on markets alone to distribute the state's students would likely result in an even greater preoccupation with prestige at the expense of achieving real educational results.

Working through the Market

The argument advanced through several recent issues of *Policy Perspectives* is that effective public policy must come to understand both the power and the limitations of markets in achieving societal objectives through higher education. Florida provides a remarkable context for exploring the logical consequences of letting the market rule, on the one hand, and, on the other, of trying to impose purposeful design on what is best described as a locally driven state system of higher education.

Think markets for the moment and imagine a system in which tuitions at public institutions were allowed to rise to a level more closely approximating their actual costs. Instead of appropriating money to public universities and colleges, give each student a subsidy or voucher equal to the amount the state would have spent on that student had he or she attended a public university or college. What would be the effects on students and institutions if the state were to discontinue the practice of direct appropriations

to public institutions and replace it with a combination of student tuition vouchers and cost-based pricing? From a purely market standpoint, one might argue that such vouchers would allow students to choose among an expanded range of institutions large and small, public and private, with different missions and a different mix of programmatic strengths. Because the tuition voucher — equal in value to the roughly $6,000 the state pays per full-time student enrolled in a public university — would apply to any university or college in the state, students would not find their choices constrained by the substantial price difference that currently exists between a public and a private institution. Students could more readily attend the institution most suited to their interests and needs.

The problems inherent in letting the market loose in this way are not hard to imagine. There is, for example, little reason to believe that most young people and their parents will prove adept at the kind of "shopping" that could lead to efficient markets yielding quality products. The evidence of the rankings mania is clear: the features most likely to capture the fancy today are prestige and pedigree — attributes for which students and parents appear more than ready to pay, given the relationship between selectivity and price in both the public and private sectors. Ironically, a reliance on markets alone to distribute the state's students would likely result in an even greater preoccupation with the appearance of quality at the expense of achieving real educational results. Each institution could choose to expend its greatest efforts acquiring the trappings of prestige in order to attract more of the most competitive and promising students, rather than sharpening its mission to educate well the majority of students it actually enrolls.

Is the answer, then, a new state master plan for higher education: a top-down design that assigns roles and funds to institutions based on a set of political or bureaucratic judgments? Little in Florida's own history — or, for that matter, in the history of most states — propels us in this direction. The prospect of the logrolling that would inevitably accompany such a process — the opportunities for genuine mischief, for institutions and specialties being placed in strange places — boggles the mind.

We seek instead public policies to ensure that the state's system of higher education reflects societal values that the market alone cannot achieve. In this case, the desired value would be a set of institutions that comprise a range of distinctive missions and strengths and can serve students of different goals and abilities. Thus our alternative is one that would use the market while reinforcing the public's stake in a strong system of higher education. We believe in educational policies that reward institutions for sharpening and adhering to their missions. Let the market play the dominant role in holding institutions accountable to their students — in market-speak, to their customers. Set tuitions high enough that students are discouraged from wasting their own time and money. Make clear to the state's institutions that the money they have to spend is in fact a function of their demonstrated ability to serve the students/customers they enroll.

At the same time, have public agencies define clear goals for institutions; have those agencies vested with sufficient resources that they can reward institutions that take on the tough challenges the market will want to ignore; and provide the checks and balances to ensure that public policy becomes something more than micro-management by public officials who are generally distant and often substantially removed from the daily challenges of establishing a quality educational environment. The result, we believe, will be institutions that are more accountable, less prone to drift and mission creep, and more likely to elevate teaching and learning to first priorities.

Moving Forward

Which institutions would lose if the basis for public policy became one of making institutions "mission centered and market smart"? If the demand for education continues to grow as anticipated, then no institution ought to lose. The only conceivable losers would be those institutions that stretch and distort their missions, spending inordinate amounts of time and resources trying to attract a larger share of the most competitive students while neglecting those of lesser distinction but considerable promise who constitute the largest share of their enrollments. Institutions that could suffer in this policy environment would be those that define their mission from a preoccupation with local self-interest and the pursuit of prestige, rather than from a commitment to help fulfill the state's larger vision for meeting its higher education needs. The most important benefit of such an approach to higher education policy is that it would encourage institutions to sharpen their missions to a

greater degree than they have done in the past. A policy that made state support of institutions more a function of their success in educating the undergraduates they actually enroll would send a strong signal that the state intends to make educational quality a central defining characteristic of its universities and colleges. It would also underscore that quality is defined by different attributes in institutions with different missions.

Toward these ends, we stress the following themes as Florida considers its higher education policy for a coming era:

The need for a venue that encourages broad public discussion of policy issues facing the state, its citizens, and its institutions of higher education. Too often the tendency has been to reach key decisions primarily on the basis of institutional or regional interests, without considering sufficiently the larger context of state objectives or the integration of individual agendas into a coherent plan for higher education. Florida needs to develop means of ensuring that a full range of voices can contribute to the discussion of how the state can fulfill the demands of increased capacity and increased quality — and of what roles the state's public and independent institutions should play in achieving these goals.

The need for greater mission differentiation among institutions. The competition among the state's public institutions in building sponsored research programs has depleted the energy and resources that many institutions might better have expended in developing stronger programs of undergraduate education. The Board of Regents' recent action to assign a mission to Florida's public universities in terms that correspond to the Carnegie classifications is an important first attempt to bring focus to what has been a process of opportunistic and undifferentiated growth. Sharpening this focus will require that the state design incentives and rewards for institutions to fulfill successfully the terms of their different missions. Targeted rewards can help to ensure that a state's institutions of higher education reflect societal values that markets in themselves cannot deliver. The state must continue to impress on its public institutions the distinctive role that each must play in serving the students and the extended range of stakeholders in regions they serve.

The need for truth in pricing. Floridians need better information about the factors that determine the prices colleges and universities charge their student/consumers. A candid public discussion of educational costs and prices would contribute to the understanding that, if Florida seeks to build greater quality in its higher education institutions, it is natural to expect that some institutional missions are inherently more expensive than others, and that tuition costs should be higher in certain institutions according to the mission and students served.

The need to define learning outcomes and gauge the success of institutions in meeting those goals. Improving the quality of higher education in Florida, as in any state, requires that institutions and their faculties identify the outcomes that their programs of learning seek to elicit in students. A public statement of learning objectives provides an appropriate yardstick to gauge how well an institution, its departments, and its programs, are meeting those goals. It is important that the outcomes be defined in terms that are befitting the particular institution, its mission, and its students. And in reckoning the achievement of different institutions, care should be taken to avoid confusing the value-added of learning with the prestige that comes from educating the most highly motivated and accomplished students. The institutions and programs that often contribute greatest value to the lives of their students are those in the lower range of the status scale — those that provide first-generation college students with the basic skills and confidence to pursue opportunities they might otherwise never have considered. In articulating their learning goals, institutions provide both themselves and their external constituencies with a common principle of accountability. This principle helps institutions not only to

In articulating their learning goals, institutions provide both themselves and their external constituencies with a common principle of accountability. This principle helps institutions not only to identify what they must do better but also to take greater pride in what they have done well.

identify what they must do better but also to take greater pride in what they have done well.

The need for better coordination between the state's policy on higher education and the needs of the business community. Florida's higher education institutions play a key role in producing an educated and skilled workforce, which in turn helps ensure the state's continued livelihood in a competitive global market. As the state considers its policy objectives for higher education, it is important that it maintain clear lines of communication and partnership with Florida's business community. A public policy that is driven predominantly by the internal interests of universities and colleges runs the risk of alienating not just the public but also the state's business leadership. While the needs of the business community should not be the only factor in determining the state's higher education policy, the insights and concerns of these employers should figure more prominently in the mix of forces than they currently do. The state's public and independent institutions need to register more often as "high-productivity centers" in the minds of employers — as educational resources that can be responsive to employers' needs and could become options of first rather than last resort for the provision of education and training.

The state's public and independent institutions need to register more often as "high-productivity centers" in the minds of employers — as educational resources that can be responsive to employers' needs and could become options of first rather than last resort for the provision of education and training.

The need for public policy that considers Florida's independent institutions as an integral part of the state's system of higher education, and that enables students to attend these institutions at a savings to the taxpayer. From a purely financial standpoint, it makes sense to conceive of the state's public and independent institutions as components of a single vision for meeting Florida's current and future educational needs. Other states such as California and New York have realized the significant budgetary savings that result from enlisting private colleges and universities in the fulfillment of state goals and strategies for higher education. Beyond the cost savings from a more efficient use of educational resources and infrastructure, such an approach increases the possibility of creating a higher education environment that offers genuine variety in institutional mission and strengths. Finally, a frame of mind that regards public and independent institutions as resources capable of alignment makes possible the development of new partnerships in meeting the state's educational challenges. In many respects higher education has extended beyond the boundaries of the physical campus, and the concept of different institutions working together in more substantive, programmatic ways should be just as feasible as the sharing of educational resources through the Internet and other means.

The need for public investment in learning infrastructure. At the same time that it prepares for a future of substantially expanded demand for higher education, Florida needs to continue steps to ensure that it remains conversant with a future that will make increasing use of electronic technology in all aspects of teaching and learning. One example of a collaborative program to achieve this objective is a statewide network, to be completed within the next year, that will link the library and distance learning facilities of Florida's public and independent institutions. More emphasis ought to be given to state educational contracts, which could be awarded on a competitive basis to universities and colleges that have presented winning proposals for programs and technology to meet current and future educational needs.

No one supposes that the state of Florida — its citizens, legislature, business leaders, or public and private universities and colleges — will find it easy to create a higher education environment that offers substantially increased capacity as well as higher quality. The magnitude of the task is such that no single agent can hope to bring it about without enlisting the partnership of others. Each party must work to overcome the narrowness of vision that subordinates the well-being of the whole to the attainment of parochial interests. The quest for individual gain has powered much of the development of the state and its higher education institutions throughout the past half century; at the same time, the competing vectors of self-fulfillment have limited the ability of Florida's colleges and universities to reach full maturity as institutions that

serve the public through a range of distinctive missions and strengths. What is needed is a compelling vision of how the state's public and independent institutions, working collectively in their different capacities, can bring about the desired ends most effectively. Without a definitive policy that can guide the development of the state's higher education resources, the ensuing chronicle of Florida's universities and colleges is likely to produce just another turn of the same events — another spin around the planet in a shuttle journey powered by nostalgia more than by the real needs of the future.

What is needed is a compelling vision of how the state's public and independent institutions, working collectively in their different capacities, can bring about the desired ends in the most effective way.

The Knight Higher Education Collaborative and its publications are funded in part through the generosity of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The essay, "Coming Around," is based on a roundtable of independent college presidents, business leaders, and people with broad experience and insight into questions of higher education policy confronting Florida and other states. Along with the issues entitled "Rumbling" (November 1996), "A Promise Worth Keeping" (August 1997), and "A Very Public Agenda" (September 1998), this essay is one of a series concerning the role of public policy in an era when market forces exert increasing influence on the shape of higher education institutions. The following individuals were participants in the Independent Colleges Roundtable and helped to shape the essay that appears in this Policy Perspectives:

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